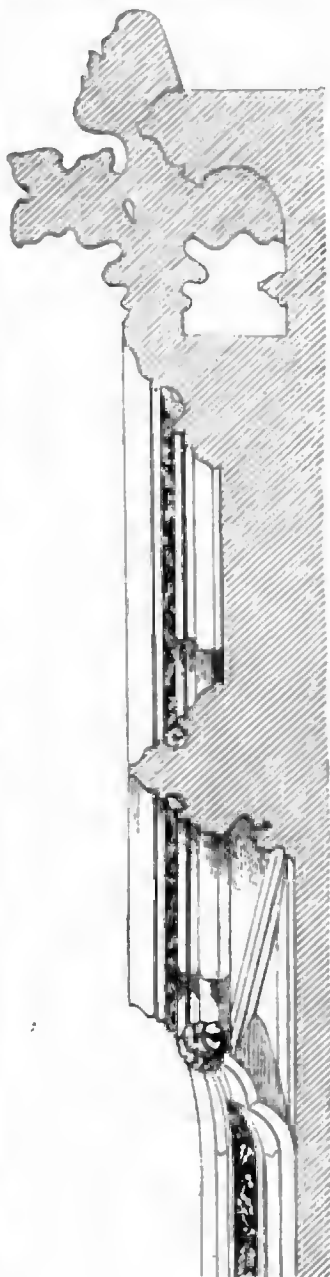


DETAILS OF STONE CANOPY.

SECTION OF MOULDINGS AT B
1/2 FULL SIZE.

PROJECTED WORKS.—Advertisements have been issued for tenders, by 31st inst., for alterations and additions to Wharton Church, Cheshire; by 8th February, for the erection of prisoners' cells, infirmary, kitchen, &c., at County Gaol, Huntingdon; and by 25th inst. for the erection of a Parsonage House, at Exbury.

MR. BARRY AND THE SEWERS' COMMISSIONERS.

DRAINAGE OF THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

A VERY CURIOUS document, comprising the report of Mr. Austin (on the part of the commission) on the drainage of the new Houses, Mr. Barry's reply, and Mr. Austin's observations thereon, has been printed, and is about to be issued for the use of the commissioners.

The matter can scarcely remain where it is, and is likely to excite much interest.

Circumstances having rendered an examination of the sewers at the building in question desirable, Mr. Austin was directed to make it, and to report to the board. From this report we learn (omitting other particulars) that a private sewer, 5 feet 6 inches high and 3 feet wide, traverses the whole length of the new buildings, joining the public sewer in Abingdon-street, at the southern end, and going directly (although not originally so) to the outfall into the river at Westminster-bridge, at the northern end. "On examination," says the report, "it is found that the portion of the sewer running through the buildings is constructed above the level of the floor of the vaults. On looking through one of the flapped communications which enter just above the invert, the sewer appeared to be at that point nearly its entire height above the ground level. On reaching the centre of the buildings, however, we discovered an opening about 2 feet square broken through the arch of the sewer, apparently for some temporary purpose. On clambering through this opening we found ourselves in the very vaults of the new buildings."

The report continues—"The condition of this main sewer throughout its entire length must be regarded as extremely dangerous to the health of those who reside in, and frequent these buildings. It is nothing but a continuous cesspool from one end to the other, emitting most noxious effluvia; and being blocked up at each end with heavy flaps, the only source of ventilation is into the buildings themselves, or into the court-yards into which these buildings look.

Dr. Reid has been at great pains, and considerable cost, in the construction of an air shaft, to avoid taking air for ventilation from near a sewer, while all the time a sewer of the first class is pouring forth into the buildings, from one end to the other, malaria, evaporating from a surface of foul matter of between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet in extent.

The foul matter throughout its whole extent is nearly equal to the full width of the sewer, and presents an evaporative surface for the exhalation of noxious effluvia equal to 150 ordinary cesspools."

Of the various communications from the buildings which open into the sewer, a most singular description, illustrated by sketches, is given. "Some of them," it is said, "are brick barrel drains, of 9, 12, 15, and 20 inches in diameter, wretchedly constructed. The outlet into the sewer of one 20-inch drain is about a fourth part of the drain itself.

Some of the communications are half-tile drains covered with brick flat, with square openings broken through into the sewer. Several are stone-ware pipes; some of them projecting into the sewer several inches, others stopping several inches short; some broken right away at the mouth by being driven forcibly in. Some are obstructed at the outlet by bricks and lumps of cement."

It proceeds:—"So much has recently been said on the extravagant size of sewers which generally prevails, that it will be unnecessary to enlarge upon this part of the subject; but it may be urged as a reason for such large constructions in this immediate district, that a certain amount of reservoir is required for the storage of storm waters during high tides, when the outlets of the sewers are closed; but these reservoirs, where indispensable, should never form the receptacles of the general refuse drainage. In the buildings in question, where every facility exists for the immediate discharge of all surface water into the river, this consideration should never have weighed at all; and in the new plans contemplated for the neighbourhood, it would indeed be extremely injudicious to admit into the general system the surface waters from buildings occupying an area of between six and seven

acres, from which no decomposing matter would be conveyed by the rain, and from which any amount of storm water may at all times be immediately discharged into the Thames.

Two fifteen-inch pipes falling each way and discharging north and south, with the inclination and pressure that would be obtained, would carry off the waters of the greatest storm upon record from nearly double the surface, or twelve acres of covered ground."

"The main sewer through the building Mr. Barry has it in contemplation to alter, by cutting off its junction with the Abingdon-street sewer, and directing the inclination all in one direction, from the south end of the buildings to the outlet at Westminster-bridge; but if the proposed separation and immediate discharge of the surface waters were to be effected, a construction of these large dimensions would be totally unnecessary, inasmuch as it would be upwards of thirty times greater than the utmost provision that should be made; and as, while it is allowed to continue, the buildings can never be maintained in a healthy condition, I would strongly advise its entire removal.

The cost of the alteration would be comparatively most trifling; but even if it were considerable, it would be folly to be spending many thousands upon ventilation, and an attempt to provide fresh air, while this fruitful and extensive source of malaria is permitted to exist.

A nine-inch pipe, with a fall each way of an inch in ten feet, which can be obtained along the present line of sewer, would discharge 72,000 gallons of water per hour; a supply many times beyond what the requirements of the buildings can ever furnish."

Mr. Barry is, of course, somewhat angry with this, and complaining that "its highly-wrought descriptions and numerous mis-statements likely to be prejudicial to his professional character, have got into print," earnestly requests the Commissioners to assist him in giving the same publicity to his replies, as the allegations have had. Mr. Barry commences with the following remarks on the system of drainage adopted:—

"That it was devised and commenced in accordance with the rules and regulations of the late Commission of Sewers for Westminster, and that the lowest available depth of drainage was adopted of which the data furnished by that Commission would admit.

That the system was arranged at a time when the present vaults of the building were not in contemplation.

That the system is as yet only partially carried out, in consequence of the unfinished state of the building; and that many of the existing arrangements connected with the drainage are either unfinished, or are of a temporary nature.

That during ten hours upon an average in every tide, the outfalls of the public and palace main sewers are closed by the rise of the tide in the river, and all drainage from the New Palace is consequently stopped for that time periodically.

Under these circumstances, no other system than that which was adopted was found to be practicable; but it has been long the intention of the architect to recommend the adoption of an exclusive system for the New Palace, by which its drains should be entirely cut off from the public sewers."

Omitting his replies to those parts of the report not mentioned by us, we pass to this,— "The main sewer is not, as stated, constructed above the floor of the vaults; the latter were not even projected when the sewer was formed. It is not the fact that it is even now in the vaults of the building; on the contrary, it passes nearly throughout its entire length under the courts and open gateways of the building. Under the courts it is imbedded in the earth, and under the gateways it occupies a space which is not a vault, and where it is intended to be imbedded in solid concrete. The only portion of it which passes under the building is for about 36 feet in length at the north end of it, where it is entirely below the vault-floor level, and imbedded in the earth. At no part of its length is the main sewer, as stated, 'nearly its entire height above the ground level,' or, as doubtless Mr. Austin means, the *cault-floor level*."